

Throw Back That Short Fish—Unharmmed!

By Conservation Officer Dominick Fresco

**“Officer, that fish wasn’t going to live anyway.”
“The fish swallowed my \$5 lure. Darned thing died when I tried to get it back, so I just kept the fish.”**

All too common, these excuses are heard daily by New Jersey Conservation Officers from the Marine Enforcement Unit when inspecting anglers who possess illegal or “short” marine fish. But be advised that COs rely on sure-fire techniques when it comes to short fish: state-issued fish measuring board. Either the fish is of legal size, or it’s not.

To release sublegal fish, follow these tips for returning hooked fish back to the water unharmmed.

The main causes of hooking mortality in fish are stress and wounding. Fish fighting after they are hooked is a major stressor. More physiological stress results from the change in temperature or pressure as fish are reeled up from depths greater than 40 feet. An outward sign of the adverse effects of the rapidly decreasing water pressure surrounding the fish during retrieval is a distended air bladder protruding from the fishes’ mouth. Of course, there’s also wounding from the hook. The degree of wounding depends on the location of the hook; gill- or gut-hooked fish have a greater possibility of death.

Catch and Release Guidelines

Plan—in advance—your strategy for releasing hooked fish, especially species with season or size restrictions. On lures, replace treble hooks with single hooks and consider pinching barbs. Try using non-offset circle hooks when fishing with bait. Use properly-sized equipment for the targeted fish species to limit time and effort spent on fighting fish. Use a slower retrieve when fishing in depths greater than 40 feet, such as offshore wreck fishing.

Once the decision is made to release, attempt to keep the fish in the water while using needle-nose pliers or a de-hooking device to extract the hook. If the fish is gill- or gut-hooked, cut the line as close to the hook as possible. Studies show the hook will release within about 120 days. Avoid netting the fish. If a



net must be used, neoprene nets cause less damage to the protective slime layer covering the fish, a layer which guards against infection.

When leaving the fish in the water is not possible, keep your hands wet at all times (less damage to the slime layer) and minimize handling—particularly the gills and soft belly. Anglers often hold fish behind the gills while de-hooking. This can be problematic, especially for flounders whose internal organs (liver, heart and stomach) are located in this small region of the body and are particularly susceptible to injury. For these fish, pinch between your thumb and fingers on top and bottom sides just behind the eyes, flattening the dorsal fin to hold the body securely.

Avoid placing fish on hard surfaces. Use on an old piece of foam cushion and place a wet rag or gloved hand over the fish’s eye. This action can subdue even the most unruly bluefish or tuna.

Revive First

As quickly as possible return the fish to the water and gently rock it back and forth several times, making water flow through the gills. To assist reviving fish (saltwater ONLY) whose air bladder is distended and protruding from the mouth the best apparatus is a hypodermic syringe with the plunger removed.

(Or purchase the Florida SeaGrant-approved venting tool kit from major sporting goods retailers.) The instrument used must be hollow in order for gases to escape and is inserted at a 45 degree angle near the fourth or fifth spine at the base of the pectoral fin. If the bloated condition is severe, gentle pressure can be applied to the abdominal wall. The venting tool should be cleaned after each use (bleach or alcohol). As for all fish, be sure to release it—*always head-first*—into the water.

These catch-and-release techniques are the only resolve anglers have when sub-legal fish are caught. If you possess illegal fish and are inspected by a Conservation Officer, be truthful and cooperative. But don’t put yourself in that situation; the best approach is to immediately release hooked fish unharmmed.

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE ■

The following publications are available by writing:

Nacote Creek, Research Station Publications
P.O. Box 418
Port Republic, NJ 08241

Shellfish Growing Waters Classification Charts

This publication is available free at any shellfish license agent and online at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/bmw/waterclass.htm>.

New Jersey Boaters Guide

Send a self-addressed stamped, #10 envelope (2 oz. postage).

New Jersey Pumpout Directory (free waterproof map)

Write to the Nacote Creek address above.

The following publications are also available online at NJFishandWildlife.com:

- Guide to New Jersey Saltwater Fishing (available online only)
- NJ Reef News
- Party and Charter Boat Directory (available online only)

▶▶ WARNING: WILDLIFE HAZARD

Please properly dispose of all fishing line. Plastic debris can endanger aquatic life and snare propellers.



Could this be *your* line?

Shyam Menon

85' DAUNTLESS BE HAPPY
Fishing every day — All year! GO FISHIN'



DAYTIME FISHING 7:30 am - 3:30 pm
Porgies • Ling • Sea Bass • Black Fish
Fluke • Cod • Flounder

EVENING FISHING 7:30 pm - 1:00 am
Blue Fishing

Professional, courteous service
Hot Food • Snack Bar • Color TV • Music
Men and Ladies Accomodated. Bring the Family!
Broadway Basin, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ
Free Parking!
732-892-4298
DauntlessFishing.com

Sailing from • BELMAR MARINE BASIN • Belmar, N.J.

55° SKYLARKER II

Stripers • Fluke
Fireworks • Cruises
Burials at Sea
Bottom Fishing



Deep Sea Sport Fishing • Inshore and Offshore
Groups up to 20
Captain Steve Spinelli
Office: (732) 502-3226 Boat: (732) 309-7689
Season: May thru January

Mary Lou Crew
SPORTFISHING CHARTERS
Inshore and offshore
saltwater fishing
973-809-9736
www.MaryLouCrew.com



Daisy May
Sportfishing • Cape May, NJ



**Flounder
Stripers • Drum
Fluke • Blues
Wreck • Tuna**

28' Baha Cruiser Sportfish • 1-4 Anglers
(215) 485-7242
Captain Dave Huffnagle
charters@daisymayfishing.com
www.DaisyMayFishing.com

NJ BOATER SAFETY
NJ STATE POLICE Certified Boating Courses
AS OF JUNE 1, 2009 NJ STATE LAW REQUIRES
ALL BOATERS/WATERCRAFT TO HAVE A VALID NJ BOATER SAFETY CERTIFICATE
SCHEDULE and REGISTRATION at
www.NJBOATERSAFETY.com

**Fine Line
Fishing
Charters
LLC**



Sailing from:
Captain Andy's Marina, Margate, NJ
(Summer Fluke Season)
Snug Harbor Marina, Cape May, NJ
(Spring and Fall)
(856) 304-0062
Captdave@finelinefishing.com
www.FineLineFishing.com

True World Tackle Charters
Captain Akira Hayashi
28' True World Marine
All bait and tackle included
201-339-2628 (store)
917-653-8068 (charter)
TrueWorldTackle.com
805 Broadway, Bayonne NJ 07002



GRUMPY'S
CUSTOM RODS
TACKLE



BAIT & TACKLE
• CUSTOM RODS
• REEL REPAIRS
• ROD REPAIRS
• ROD BUILDING
SUPPLIES

732-830-1900
906 NE CENTRAL AVE
SEASIDE PARK, NJ 08752
"Nothing Beats A Grumpy Clam!"

**BENCHMARK
SPORTFISHING**

1-6 Passenger
Charters
Specializing in
Canyon Tuna,
Striped Bass,
Shark, Fluke
and more!



Highlands, NJ, May and November
Point Pleasant Beach, NJ, June through October
Call Captain Nick Neuberg:
732-851-5103 or 732-547-5688
NewJerseySportfishing.com

BLUE FIN LURES



TUNA • DOLPHIN • MARLIN
These high quality trolling lures get results!
Double skirts and reflective mylar get strikes
that other lures don't!
See our entire line of high quality trolling lures at
WWW.BLUEFINLURES.BIZ

PARTY TIME CHARTERS



40Ft. Viking Yacht • 38Ft. Rampage Express
Inshore/Offshore • 1-6 passengers
Family trips to Tournament fishing
Apr-Dec: Cape May, NJ
Apr & May: Tilghmans Island, MD
609-417-5469
PartyTimeCharters.com

FLORIDA FISHING & HUNTING
LAKE OKEECHOBEE TROPHY BASS FISHING
2 1/2 day 1 night 6 doz shiners \$220.
full day rate \$140. / half day rate \$85.
CRAPPIE, BLUEGILL & SHELLCRACKER FISHING
2 1/2 day 1 night \$190.
WILD HOG & GATOR YEAR-ROUND HUNTING
WILD BOAR \$100. (kill processed free)
ALLIGATOR (free processing, hide & all meat)
9 to 12 ft. \$2,495. / 6 to 9 ft. \$1,495.
4 to 6 ft. two for only \$1,495.
DUCK 1 day \$100. / 2 day, 1 night \$240.
RON'S GUIDE SERVICE
(863) 287-8484 or (863) 946-1742
WWW.RONSGUIDESERVICE.COM

FISHIN' FEVER SPORT FISHING



Striper • Drum • Tuna
Flounder • Sea Bass
Tog • Sharks • Bluefish
31' Downeast Sportfisherman
Bay, Inshore & Offshore charters
(609) 868-6014
FISHINFEVERSPORTFISHING.COM

Weigh Point Sport Fishing
Capt. Ralph Roth



1-4 Passengers • 25' Parker Sport Cabin
Striped Bass • Bluefish • Weakfish • Fluke
Blackfish • Sea Bass • Shark Fishing
Liberty Landing Marina in Liberty State Park
Book now! 1-732-512-8827
www.WeighPointSportFishing.com



New Jersey Fish & Wildlife DIGEST

Internet Address.....	www.NJFishandWildlife.com
Commercial Preserves & Semi-Wild Preserves.....	(609) 292-1242
Deer & Turkey Permit Hotline.....	(609) 292-9192
DEP ACTION LINE—24 HOURS	(877) WARNDPEP
Exotic & Nongame Captivity Permits.....	(908) 735-5450
Falconry Permit Information.....	(908) 735-8793
General Information	(609) 292-2965
Horseback Riding Permits.....	(609) 259-2132
Hunter Education.....	(877) 2HUNTNTJ
Hunting, Fishing & Duplicate Licenses.....	(609) 292-2965
Operation Game Thief.....	(800) 222-0456
Outstanding Deer Program.....	(609) 633-7598
Pheasant & Quail Stocking Information.....	(609) 984-0547
Rifle Permit Info.....	(609) 984-1400
Trout Stocking Hotline.....	(609) 633-6765
Wildlife Conservation Corps Information.....	(856) 629-1014
Wildlife Control.....	(908) 735-8793
Wildlife Education.....	(908) 637-4125
Wildlife Management Area Information.....	(609) 984-0547
Trenton Office	
P.O. Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625-0400	
Endangered and Nongame Species.....	(609) 292-9400
Land Management.....	(609) 984-0547
Marine Fisheries.....	(609) 292-7794
Shellfisheries.....	(609) 984-5546
Wildlife Management.....	(609) 292-6685
Nacote Creek Research Station	
P.O. Box 418, 360 Rt. 9 N. (Milepost 51) Port Republic, NJ 08241	
Marine Fisheries.....	(609) 748-2020
Marine Fisheries "Listen Only" regulation line.....	(609) 292-2083
Shellfisheries.....	(609) 748-2040
Marine Education.....	(609) 748-2031
Marine Law Enforcement	(609) 748-2050
Delaware Bay Office	
1672 E. Buckshutem Rd., Millville, NJ 08332.....	(856) 785-0730
Shellfish Dealership Information	
NJ Consumer Health Service, Dept. of Health P.O. Box 369, Trenton, NJ 08625.....	(609) 588-3123
Shellfish Water Classification	
DEP, Water Monitoring and Standards P.O. Box 405, Stoney Hill Road, Leeds Point, NJ 08220.....	(609) 748-2000
Lebanon Field Office	
Freshwater Fisheries P.O. Box 394, 1255 County Rt. 629, Lebanon, NJ 08833.....	(908) 236-2118
Northern Region Office	
26 Route 173 W., Hampton, NJ 08827	
Wildlife Management.....	(908) 735-7040
Endangered and Nongame Species (1 Van Syckel's Rd.).....	(908) 638-4127
Hunter Education.....	(877) 2HUNTNTJ
Wildlife Control.....	(908) 735-8793
Land Management.....	(973) 383-0918
Law Enforcement (<i>Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren counties</i>).....	(908) 735-8240
Pequest Trout Hatchery.....	(908) 637-4173
Pequest Natural Resource Education Center	
605 Pequest Rd., Oxford, NJ 07863.....	(908) 637-4125
Hackettstown Fish Hatchery	
P.O. Box 327, Hackettstown, NJ 07840.....	(908) 852-3676
Central Region Office	
1 Eldridge Rd., Robbinsville, NJ 08691	
Land Management.....	(609) 259-2132
Hunter Education.....	(877) 2HUNTNTJ
Wildlife Control.....	(609) 259-7955
Law Enforcement (<i>Burlington, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean counties</i>).....	(609) 259-2120
Southern Region Office	
220 Blue Anchor Rd., Sicklerville, NJ 08081	
Information.....	(856) 629-0090
Freshwater Fisheries.....	(856) 629-4950
Hunter Education.....	(877) 2HUNTNTJ
Land Management.....	(856) 629-5006
Wildlife Control.....	(856) 629-7224
Law Enforcement (<i>Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem counties</i>).....	(856) 629-0555

Share your product or service with New Jersey sportsmen!



For advertising inquiries, please call (413) 884-1001

J.F. GRIFFIN
PUBLISHING LLC.

Buccaneer

Captain Ralph Conrad
Six Passenger

Drum - Striper - Weakfish - Flounder

Specializing in Drum and Striper in the Bay

(856) 678-3563 Home
(856) 498-8522 Cell
Fortescue, New Jersey

Jersey Devil Charters



Fish the Raritan Bay!
Inshore and offshore fishing for Trophy Stripers, Bluefish, Fluke, Sharks, Tuna and more!



Captain Brian Rice
Fair Haven, NJ
732-996-6372

JerseyDevilCharters.com

Elasmodiver.com



Sharks, rays and other sealife

Photos and prints by Andy Murch

MELTZER'S SPORTING GOODS

Established 1914

One of the oldest sporting goods shops in NJ

Full line of fresh and saltwater tackle
Large selection of new and used guns
Knowledgeable sales staff
Discount prices

118 Outwater Lane Garfield, NJ 07026 **973-478-7647**
MeltzersSportingGoods.com

ESCAPE EVERYDAY

FROM
THE

ESCAPE FROM THE EVERYDAY with WFN – World Fishing Network. WFN gives you more than just fishing – explore the people and places that define the sport on George Poveromo's *World of Saltwater Fishing*, WFN's *Reel Road Trip*, *Fishing the Flats*, *Gillznfins*, *Reel Adventures* and much more.

Don't get WFN? Call your cable or satellite provider today and demand that WFN be added to your channel line up.

Call your TV provider to subscribe today.

- VERIZON FIOS / Ch. 597(HD) + 317 / 1-888-553-1555
- DISH NETWORK / Ch. 394(HD) / 1-888-825-2557
- CHARTER (Minnesota) / Ch. 407(SD) / 1-888-438-2427

WFN HD
WORLD FISHING NETWORK™

WFN
WORLD FISHING NETWORK™

Visit www.wfn.tv
for more information.

GUN, KNIFE & WEAPON LAW

ANY & ALL CRIMES

EVAN F. NAPPEN
Attorney-at-Law
a Professional Corporation

Gun, Knife & Weapon Law • Fish & Game Law • Domestic Violence
Gun Seizures & Forfeitures • Licenses • Permits • NICS Purchase Denials
Rights Restoration • Expungements (Clear Your Record)

1-888-GUN-LAWS
(1-888-486-5297)

Law Office Located in Eatontown, NJ

www.evannappen.com